

Greetings;

I hope all of you were able to deal successfully with the extreme weather we experienced this past week. There were closures and delays in opening across the state in nearly all of our facilities and offices due to dangerous winter conditions but it looks as though we all managed to pull through. I appreciate everyone's effort to ensure our facilities and offices continued to operate during this time.

We continue to meet with key legislative leaders who are working with us to chart the course for the agency. The House Appropriations Committee has a workgroup of members examining the structure of our budget and discussing possible legislation to continue improving outcomes and supporting the system. We have limited information about those discussions but we have provided material for their consideration that is consistent with the direction we are proposing (reducing population and moving to regional facilities). We've also met with Senate leadership who are generally supportive of the agency and our future plans. This is the first week when legislators have wanted to roll up their sleeves and talk details. We were ready for it and encouraged by the conversations. We continue to take it a day at a time.

This past week we welcomed Dr. Tushar Desai as our new Medical Director. Dr. Desai is board certified in General Psychiatry and in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and has a very distinguished career. We are excited to welcome him to TJJD and feel very fortunate to have his leadership and expertise.

On Friday, I held a Town Hall meeting for our employees in the Austin Office. My message to them is the same as it has been to all of you during the past month – changes are coming to our agency but they are changes that will help us better serve our youth and accomplish our mission. Also, we are not anticipating sudden closures, layoffs, or any of the other extremes that seem to be the focus of rumors. Our proposals provide for changes that will be carefully planned, managed and would be in the form of a transition that unfolds over a number of years.

The most important thing that any of us can do during this time of uncertainty is to continue doing our job to the best of our ability. While much of the talk today is about the future of the agency, we can't lose sight of the important work that is immediately before us. We have hundreds of youth today who are dependent on every one of us and I greatly appreciate everything your work on their behalf.

David